

7 December 1976

MEMORANDUM FOR: Charles A. Bohrer, M.D.  
Director of Medical Services *WLB*

STATINTL FROM :   
Chief, Psychological Services Staff  
Office of Medical Services

SUBJECT : Commentary on Reference

REFERENCE : Memo to DDCI, "Use of Professional  
Aptitude Test Battery", from  
Chairman, DCI EEO Advisory Panel,  
24 November 1976

1. The recommendations in the referenced memo seek to guard against inappropriate uses of test data in selection/assignment decisions via both positive measures (e.g., steps to better inform Agency officials of the meaning of the test results) and negative measures (proscriptions on the scope of the reports themselves, the weight to be assigned to them, and on access to them). The purpose and thrust of these recommendations is sound, and consistent with professional principles. Two points made here: (1) that the test report must in no way preempt the decision-maker's responsibility, and (2) that no applicant should be rejected solely on the basis of test results, merit particular endorsement, though the latter point deserves some qualification.

2. Consider, for example, the plight of the manager who is confronted with generally favorable file information (good grade point average from a school of unknown standards and a restrained but "positive" recruiter's report). A poor test performance may be the only "negative" finding, but may also constitute the only "hard" data available.

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Should the "no rejection on the basis of PATB alone" rule demand continued processing in all such cases? And if so, what kinds of additional data should be sought to check out the implications of the test performance? Some additional guidance to managers on these points would be helpful.

3. One note of clarification may be in order regarding the predictive power of PATB and the appropriateness of certain kinds of statements in the PATB report. For certain jobs in certain offices, research studies have established specific relationships between test scores and some measure of job success. In these instances, it is appropriate to include in the report of the test findings on an applicant for such positions a statement about predicted success. In other cases, a description of relative strengths and weaknesses without reference to "suitability for Agency professional employment" is in order. It is true that test patterns occasionally appear so out of phase with Agency job demands that one would be hard put to conceive of an assignment that would be compatible with the test profile. Nevertheless, since no research data presently exist which would justify judgments of non-suitability for Agency professional employment across the board, broad generalizations to this effect are not warranted.

4. Finally, it should be noted that if elimination of bias in hiring decisions is the basic objective of these efforts, a narrow focus on the role of testing risks missing the target. This point is reinforced when one realizes that tests are the one single element in the selection process for which any validity data exist. Given the far greater susceptibility to bias of judgments made in applicant interviews and in the weighing of all elements in the final decision process, some requirement for evidence of reliability in these processes might do more to curb bias than any conceivable set of rules pertaining to tests alone. For example, a requirement for independent interviews and evaluations by four to six competent judges, each acting individually and reviewing all of the relevant information (including, of course, the test data), might be one approach to consider.

STATINTL

Attachment

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